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Amendment and/or Response
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Amendments to the Claims:

A listing of the entire set of pending claims (including amendments to the claims, if any) is submitted herewith per 37 CFR 1.121. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) An object-based encoding system for encoding a video image, comprising:
 - a foreground encoding system for generating foreground shape data and coding a foreground shape in a foreground object plane;
 - a padding system that pads a masked area in a background video object plane, wherein the masked area is determined from data associated with the foreground shape and is padded with an arbitrary value; and
 - a background encoding system for coding the background object plane.
2. (Original) The object-based encoding system of claim 1, wherein the foreground encoding system utilizes a shape-based encoding scheme.
3. (Original) The object-based encoding system of claim 1, wherein the background encoding system utilizes a frame-based encoding scheme.
4. (Original) The object-based encoding system of claim 1, wherein the masked area is padded with zeros when the video image comprises a P or B frame.
5. (Original) The object-based encoding system of claim 1, wherein the masked area is padded with an average pixel value of the masked area when the video image comprises an I frame.
6. (Currently amended) The object-based encoding system of claim 1, wherein the object based encoding system comprises an MPEG-4 encoder.

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7. (Currently amended) A method of encoding a video image in an object-based encoding system, comprising:

- generating foreground shape data;
- coding a foreground shape in a foreground video object plane;
- padding a masked area in a background video object plane, wherein the masked area is determined from data associated with the foreground shape and is padded with an arbitrary value; and
- coding the background video object plane.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the foreground shape is encoded with a shape-based encoding scheme.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the background shape video object plane is encoded utilizing a frame-based encoding scheme.

10. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the masked area is padded with zeros when the video image comprises a P or B frame.

11. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the masked area is padded with an average pixel value of the masked area when the video image comprises an I frame.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the object based encoding system comprises an MPEG-4 encoder.

13. (Currently amended) A computer program-product stored on a computer readable medium for encoding a video image in an object-based encoding system, said object-based encoding system comprising:
means for generating foreground shape data;

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means for coding a foreground shape in a foreground video object plane;
means for padding a masked area in a background video object plane,
wherein the masked area is determined from data associated with the foreground
shape and is padded with an arbitrary value; and
means for coding the background video object plane.

14. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the foreground shape is encoded with a shape-based encoding scheme.

15. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the background video object plane shape is encoded utilizing a frame-based encoding scheme.

16. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the masked area is padded with zeros when the video image comprises a P or B frame.

17. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the masked area is padded with an average pixel value of the masked area when the video image comprises an I frame.

18. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the object based encoding system comprises an MPEG-4 encoder.

19. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the background video object plane is texture coded.

20. (Currently amended) The computer program-product of claim 13, wherein the background video object plane is shape coded.

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